



THE AMATEUR GARDENER

by Vanda Lawrence



Osteospermum ©Wikimedia Commons/ Rob Hille

It's August again and the sun has got his hat on, hip, hip, hip, hooray! All our hard work over the previous months has paid off and it's been worth it. So this month we can relax a bit and enjoy the gorgeous flowers and shrubs with their lovely colours and scents.

What a pleasure to wander beside the roses and lavender or sit beneath the Linden tree and drink in the wonderful fragrances. Even when you are watering or hoeing you can still enjoy the sight and smell of them all.

And while you are dead-heading, cutting back and generally keeping everything tidy, this is also a good time to pot on a few strawberry plants from runners to replace those which have stopped fruiting. Take cuttings of flowering shrubs too and prune those which have finished flowering.

Take semi-ripe cuttings of tender perennials such as *Osteospermum*:

- 4-6" long and cut beneath a leaf node
- remove the bottom leaves and dip in hormone rooting powder
- pinch out the growing tip and plant around the edge of a plant pot
- they will need to be kept in a greenhouse or on a light windowsill to bring them on until established.

Take cuttings of rock garden plants such as *Aubretia*. Use the same procedure as above but choose non-flowering shoots 2-3" long. They will take approximately 6 months before they can be potted on.

Finish pruning the *Wisteria* by cutting all the 'whippy' side shoots back to 4 or 5 leaves from the main stem, and prune climbing roses after they have finished flowering (unless they are repeat flowering, in which case leave them).

Water camellias, azaleas and rhododendrons well to ensure good bud set in readiness for another wonderful display next year.

Towards the end of this month you can sow hardy annuals directly into the borders. They will overwinter and flower next summer.



Aubretia ©Wikimedia Commons/Pauline Eccles

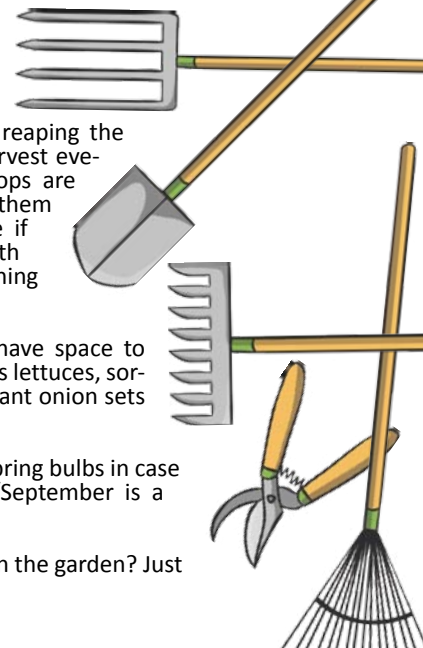
August is also a good time to plant spring bulbs ready for a good display next year.

In the vegetable garden we are reaping the benefits of all our hard work. Harvest everything! And do it while the crops are young and succulent, don't leave them to get tough and stringy. Freeze if necessary and swap/share with friends and neighbours so nothing goes to waste.

As crops are removed you will have space to plant quick-maturing crops such as lettuces, sorrel and rocket but you can also plant onion sets and winter spinach now.

Start thinking about next year's spring bulbs in case you need to order any. August/September is a good time to plant them.

Did I say this was an easy month in the garden? Just ignore me, I've lost the plot!



Wisteria ©Wikimedia Commons/Jean Tosti